

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the requisite number of words.

Mr. Chairman, 10 years ago President Bush announced a no-net-loss policy for Wetlands in this country; and, as a local official, I saluted him for that. It was a policy that was long overdue.

We have heard colleagues from both sides of the aisle talk about the need to protect wetlands in this country. Yet we continue to fall far short of the goal articulated by President Bush.

We can quibble about the statistics, but we are still losing between 1,000 and 2,000 acres per week, 50 to 100 thousand acres per year, year after year, losing this precious resource.

The gentleman does not understand why we should intervene quickly if someone is proposing to develop land as opposed to a slight delay or a longer delay in terms of development. There is a big difference. Because if we allow development to proceed forthwith, we lose that wetland. There is a big, big difference.

I can understand in my mind why it would be sound Government policy to act immediately if there is a potential for losing this activity.

Mr. PACKARD. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. BLUMENAUER. I yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. PACKARD. Mr. Chairman, this provision, I think, is better known now as the puppy. The gentleman has not met this puppy. It is not a puppy that wants to destroy wetlands. Nor is it a puppy that wants to delay the process.

The provision in the bill does not change any of the procedures required by an applicant. It

simply gives them the opportunity to appeal the decision. But it certainly is not going to deplete wetlands. That is simply not an issue in this.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Chairman, reclaiming my time, I was explaining why it was sound Government policy to permit an immediate action if we are going to lose a resource that is going to be lost for centuries or millennia, as opposed to having a slight delay for development that people can go ahead and appeal and can move forward.

We have seen tremendous progress that has been made streamlining. And, in fact, we have streamlined in many cases too well. We have not halted the loss of the wetlands in this country.

Wetlands, as has been documented, are the cheapest way that we are going to provide flood control. They are the cheapest way that we are going to provide for endangered species. It is the most cost-effective way for combined sewer overflow problems that plague over 1,100 communities around the country.

It is, with all due respect, an effort that a number of us who are concerned environmentally see this as being putting sand in the gears. The last thing an underfunded, overworked Corps of Engineers needs to do is to come forward with yet another study.

They are working on this. I have been a critic at times of the Corps, but I am impressed with the 180-degree effort that has been undertaken on behalf of the Corps of Engineers. We do not need to sidetrack them. They have had over 10,000 comments, moving forward.

Let them develop an administrative procedure for appeal. Do not move it automatically to the courts, undermining some of the incentives that we have now for people to work cooperatively to solve these problems.

We do not need, in my judgment, for us to go once again in an appropriations bill undercutting the work that we appropriately do in the authorizing committee.

I would defer to my friend from New York, the chair of the Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment, for work that he might do in terms of fine-tuning. In fact, I urge that we bring some of our friends together from a variety of water resources agencies because it goes beyond the Corps of Engineers. It includes FEMA. It includes Interior, the Bureau of Reclamation. There are a wide range of people that need to be involved.

I am not concerned if we require local governments, water districts, school districts, even some Federal agencies to play by the same rules that we require the private sector. That is not an argument for pulling the plug. I think that helps us fine-tune and move the process forward.

I strongly urge support for the Visclosky-Borski-Oberstar amendment and that we move away from this notion of environmental legislation with the appropriations process.

Mr. BAKER. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. BLUMENAUER. I yield to the gentleman from Louisiana.

Mr. BAKER. I just wish to point out that the appropriations process gave an additional \$11 million for regulatory and administrative procedures in the proposed budget, and, secondly, just a quick Louisiana note, we lose more wetlands in one 2- or 3-day period from one Stage or Level 3 storm called a hurricane than we do in the entire year of normal geological processes. If the gentleman really wishes to help us save wetlands in Louisiana, we just need a few bucks to do some onshore revetments to protect whatever precious wetlands we have left. Otherwise our coastline is going to be up somewhere south of Arkansas.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Reclaiming my time, with all due respect, I think there are a whole host of areas we could constructively discuss in terms of what has happened environmentally with the State of Louisiana. I think by some ill-planned efforts that have gone, including the Federal Government, over the years, that we have helped create sort of an environmental time bomb in terms of Louisiana.

Mr. BAKER. I will agree with the gentleman, if he will yield further just quickly. One of the problems, which I know that he would not support, would be to let the Mississippi River meander to its natural course.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Chairman, I will talk with the gentleman about the Mississippi River flood control and these sorts of things at another time.